



## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:

Dec. 27, 2013

For More Information, Contact:

Tracy K. Miller, MPH  
State Epidemiologist  
Division of Disease Control  
North Dakota Department of Health  
Phone: 701.328.2378  
E-mail: [tkmiller@nd.gov](mailto:tkmiller@nd.gov)

**Department of Health Announces Preliminary Findings of Hepatitis C Investigation in Minot**  
*Exact Method of Transmission Not Identified*

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) is announcing preliminary findings from the Hepatitis C outbreak investigation in Minot. “The goal of this investigation was to identify modes of transmission or risk factors associated with Hepatitis C in this population and stop ongoing transmission,” said Tracy Miller, state epidemiologist for the North Dakota Department of Health. “At this time we still do not fully understand how transmission occurred.”

Currently, all of the cases involve current or former residents at ManorCare Health Services in Minot. An epidemiologic analysis has been conducted comparing exposures among those residents infected with Hepatitis C to exposures among those who were not infected. This analysis provided preliminary statistical information suggesting that having Hepatitis C may be associated with receipt of: (1) podiatry and phlebotomy (blood draw) services through contractual agreements with Trinity Health; and (2) nail care services by ManorCare. “Through observations and interviews, we further investigated these areas looking for possible breaches in infection control procedures that would explain the transmission of Hepatitis C,” said Miller, “however we did not observe any obvious breaches that would explain transmission.” The data analysis did not show any association with having Hepatitis C and receiving any other health care services in the community and the general population is not at an increased risk of infection.

“Even though we have not identified the exact method Hepatitis C was transmitted in this outbreak, the health-care providers have worked proactively with us to review and reinforce policies and procedures to strengthen infection control protocols,” said Miller. “Throughout this investigation, all of the health-care partners we have worked with have been engaged and fully cooperative. Everyone’s goal is to protect patients and provide the highest quality health care possible.”

The North Dakota Department of Health will be bringing in a specialist to help review infection control policies and procedures in both facilities. In about one third of all Hepatitis C outbreak investigations, no exact method of transmission is ever identified. However, in these outbreaks where an exact method of transmission has not been identified, putting an emphasis on strict infection control procedures has proven effective in stopping the spread of infection.

-more-

The North Dakota Department of Health will continue to monitor the outbreak by conducting targeted testing in health-care facilities and in the community. Anyone for whom testing is recommended will be notified by the Department of Health.

This investigation was conducted with assistance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other state and local agencies. To date, 44 cases of Hepatitis C have been identified as part of the outbreak. Ages for cases range from 38 to 100, with the median age being 84. All of the cases have a very complex health care history, which includes inpatient care, outpatient care and long-term care.

Hepatitis C is a viral infection that can cause serious liver disease. People with Hepatitis C should work with their health-care provider on a care plan for their infection. Hepatitis C is primarily transmitted through blood-to-blood contact. The Hepatitis C virus is NOT spread by sharing eating utensils, hugging, kissing, holding hands, coughing, or sneezing, and it is not spread through food or water.

Members of the public who have questions about either this outbreak or Hepatitis C in general may call the NDDoH's Public Health Hotline toll-free at 1.866.207.2880. The hotline is open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays. Information is also available on the NDDoH website at [www.ndhealth.gov](http://www.ndhealth.gov) (click on link in the Current Issues Box), our Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/ndhealth](https://www.facebook.com/ndhealth), and on Twitter with the hashtag #ndhepc.

Reporters who need more information may call Tracy Miller, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.2378.

– 30 –

*Please note: To access archived news releases and other information, visit the North Dakota Department of Health Press Room at [www.nddohpressroom.gov](http://www.nddohpressroom.gov).*

*Find us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/ndhealth](https://www.facebook.com/ndhealth) or twitter at [twitter.com/nddoh](https://twitter.com/nddoh).*